

Working Group for Bosnia and Herzegovina

His Excellency, Mr. Gilad Erdan
Ambassador of Israel
Embassy of Israel
3514 International Drive NW
Washington, DC 20008

July 8, 2021

Dear Ambassador Erdan,

We are writing to you as part of an urgent appeal to the State of Israel to donate surplus Covid-19 vaccines to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which now faces a dual crisis of a lack of immediate access to vaccines and one of the highest Covid-19 death rates in the world. As of July 3, 2021, the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center reported that Bosnia's mortality rate was 4.7%, the 8th highest rate in the world.¹ And as of July 3, 2021, less than 4.69% of the population has been fully vaccinated.²

Following our appeal in May for urgently needed COVID-19 vaccines for Bosnia, along with appeals from other individuals and groups, President Biden announced the donation of 500,000 Pfizer vaccines to Bosnia, vaccines which are expected to be delivered soon in July 2021. We are deeply grateful for President Biden's substantial donation of the life-saving vaccines. However, with a population of 3.3 million citizens, there is an urgent need for Bosnia to receive additional vaccine donations. Therefore, we are reaching out to request Israel's emergency provision of any available vaccines to help Bosnia respond to this unprecedented public health crisis.

We would like to emphasize that while all vaccine donations will be distributed equitably to Bosnia's diverse population, Israel's donation would also provide crucial support for Bosnia's historic Jewish community. Traced back to the diaspora resulting from the Spanish Inquisition, the Sarajevo Jewish community is especially known for its historic Synagogue and Museum, which houses an exhibition of the Righteous Among the Nations from the Balkans who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, and for the exquisite Sarajevo Haggadah (dating from 1350), which is on display in Bosnia's National Museum. The proud Sephardic community has preserved its 500-year-old Ladino language brought from Spain. But now, the community that has persevered through WWII and through the siege of Sarajevo, against all odds, has been severely impacted by the pandemic and urgently needs your support. We appeal to you in memory of Sarajevo Professor/Cantor David Kamhi (8 October 1936 – 12 March 2021), a Holocaust survivor, who passed away in March due to Covid-19, and who is dearly missed.

While other countries in addition to the United States have pledged vaccines for Bosnia and Herzegovina, those promised vaccines have not yet arrived and their delivery dates are unknown. Bosnia has simply not been able to undertake an effective vaccination campaign due to vaccine shortages. In his May 4 report to the United Nations Security Council, High Representative Valentin Inzko reported that vaccines have barely been "trickling in" to Bosnia.³

Therefore, we are imploring you to send Bosnia and Herzegovina any available COVID-19 vaccines that would be possible in response to this public health and humanitarian crisis. We, along with the rest of the world, have been heartened by the success of the vaccination campaign in Israel, and hope you will be able to provide similar life-saving support to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Working Group for Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Dr. David Pettigrew, Professor of Philosophy and Holocaust and Genocide Studies,
Southern Connecticut State University, Steering Committee, Yale Genocide Studies Program,⁴
Patrick McCarthy, Associate Dean of University Libraries, Director of Medical Center Library, St.
Louis University,

Phillip L. Weiner, former International Judge, State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Djenita Pasic, Esq., Attorney, Louisville, Kentucky,

Kenan Arnautović, M.D., Ph.D., Neurosurgeon, Memphis, Tennessee,

Vildana Bijedic, MSc, London School of Economics; Founder “Mandala Academy Foundation”
BiH,

Emir Festic, M.D., Critical Care Medicine Specialist, Jacksonville, FL,

Russ Carnahan, former United States Representative for Missouri’s 3rd Congressional District,

Almira Delibegovic-Broome QC, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK,

Damir Husamovic, M.Econ. Member of the Board of Directors, Islamic Community of North

American Bosniaks, President, Bosnian Islamic Center of Saint Louis,

Professor Tanya Domi, member of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, NYC,

Ismar Volić, Professor of Mathematics, Wellesley College, Director of Institute for Mathematics
and Democracy,

Dženeta Karabegović, Migration Scholar, University of Salzburg,

Akif Cogo, St. Louis Bosnians Inc.,

Azem Dervišević, Business and Community Entrepreneur, Cambridge, MA,

Mead Mišić, Esq., Attorney, Boston Massachusetts

cc. Consulate General of Israel in New York
Consulate General of Israel in Los Angeles
Consulate General of Israel to New England
Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest
Consulate General of Israel in Miami
Consulate General of Israel in San Francisco
Consulate General of Israel to in Houston
Consulate General of Israel in Atlanta
Ambassador Valentin Inzko, High Representative, Bosnia and Herzegovina

¹ "Mortality Analyses," *Johns Hopkins University & Medicine: Coronavirus Resource Center*, July 3, 2021, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>.

² "Overview: Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Johns Hopkins University & Medicine: Coronavirus Resource Center*, July 3, 2021, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

³ "59th report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Secretary-General of the United Nations," *OHR*, May 4, 2021, <http://www.ohr.int/59th-report-of-the-high-representative-for-implementation-of-the-peace-agreement-on-bosnia-and-herzegovina-to-the-secretary-general-of-the-united-nations/>.

⁴ Please contact Dr. David Pettigrew at pettigrewd1@southernct.edu, or Patrick McCarthy at mccartpg@gmail.com.